

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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July 6, 2011

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**Statement on Ongoing Situation in Syria**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Office of the Spokesperson  
July 5, 2011

STATEMENT BY VICTORIA NULAND,  
SPOKESPERSON

**Syria – Ongoing Situation**

The United States remains deeply concerned by the ongoing attacks against peaceful protestors at the hands of the Syrian government. The government of Syria claims it is interested in a dialogue with the opposition. Yet, its actions in cities like Hama and along the Turkish border directly undermine the credibility of its words and its initiative. Syrian security forces have once again stepped up their repression and harassment of peaceful demonstrators and opposition members. There is no justification, no excuse for the Syrian security forces to begin yet another crackdown, killing protesters and arresting people suspected of political opposition. We urge the government of Syria to immediately halt its intimidation and arrest campaign, pull its security forces back from Hama and other cities, and allow the Syrian people to express their opinions freely so that a genuine transition to democracy can take place. The international community will continue to stand with the people of Syria as they seek their universal human rights.

**Announcement of Opening of U.S. Consulate General in Basrah, Iraq**

U.S. CONSULATE GENERAL – BASRAH  
News Release  
July 5, 2011

**Opening of U.S. Consulate General - Basrah**

On July 5, U.S. Ambassador James F. Jeffrey officially opened the U.S. Consulate General in Basrah, Iraq, with Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey D. Feltman in attendance. The U.S. has had a diplomatic presence in Basrah dating as far back as 1869. The U.S. Consulate in Basrah closed in 1967, although civilian U.S. agencies working with military colleagues in the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) have made memorable and lasting contributions to Basrah Province, including projects to provide water treatment, schools and other educational facilities, and a hospital.

During the opening ceremony, Ambassador Jeffrey invoked the commitment shared by Iraqis and Americans to freedom and democracy, as well as the authority granted to him by the President of the United States and

the Secretary of State, elevating the U.S. PRT to the status of Consulate General. He also announced the pending appointment of Ms. Piper A. W. Campbell to the position of Consul General. The consular district for U.S. Consulate General Basrah will include Basrah, Muthanna, Maysan, and Dhi Qar.

In earlier remarks to Iraqi press, Assistant Secretary Feltman noted that “We pledge our continued support to the Iraqi people in establishing a sovereign, stable, self-reliant country. As a fellow democracy, the United States appreciates the challenges that the new democracy of Iraq faces in building an inclusive society. Partnering with Iraqi interlocutors, we will continue to support Iraq’s development in ways that reflect our shared values of tolerance and diversity.”

The announcement took place during a reception in recognition of the 235th anniversary of the independence of the United States of America, which occurred yesterday, the Fourth of July. In attendance were a number of dignitaries, including the Governor of Basrah - Dr. Khalef Abdul Samed, and other high level Iraqi officials from the government, military, and civil society.

**United States Resumes Aid Program in Niger**

Washington — The United States will resume assisting Niger according to the terms of a pact designed to help developing nations promote good governance, national responsibility and measurable results.

The board of directors of the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), chaired by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, voted unanimously June 22 to reinstate an assistance charter with Niger in recognition of its return to democratic rule, the corporation announced.

The MCC, an independent U.S. foreign aid corporation, collaborates with countries committed to good governance, economic freedom and investment in their citizens to help lead the fight against global poverty.

The \$23.1 million threshold program for Niger focuses on improving education for women, local governance, anti-corruption efforts and good business practices.

MCC threshold programs award grants to countries close to meeting MCC criteria but not yet eligible for the larger five-year compact grants. Countries qualifying for the threshold program must demonstrate their commitment to policy improvements in three categories: ruling justly, investing in people and encouraging economic freedom.

The corporation suspended the threshold program with Niger in December 2009 after political events there were deemed inconsistent with eligibility criteria.

"MCC's decision to reinstate Niger's threshold partner status is not only an affirmation of Niger's return to democratic and constitutional rule, but it demonstrates the importance MCC places on working with countries whose leaders promote democratic principles to advance the well-being, development and security of their people," said MCC Chief Executive Officer Daniel Yohannes in a statement June 24. An MCC delegation will go to Niger in early July to discuss resuming the program.

Yohannes called Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou to inform him of MCC's intention to reinstate the program. During the call, Yohannes said, "We celebrate the restoration of a democratically elected government in Niger and look forward to working with your government to reduce poverty by promoting economic growth."

President Issoufou's inauguration in April marked the return of a government elected directly by the people of Niger.

The charter of the MCC, a U.S. government corporation created in 2004, asserts that aid is most effective when it helps countries achieve their own development objectives within a framework of sound political, economic and social policies. The MCC supports country-determined projects worldwide in agriculture and irrigation, transportation, water supply and sanitation, health care, finance and enterprise development, anti-corruption, land rights and education.

"MCC recognizes that our work has greater impact and is more sustainable in countries that rule justly, invest in their people, and provide economic freedom," Yohannes said. "The credibility and the goodwill generated through successful country ownership of our programs has generated a keen desire for countries to partner with MCC. As a result, we are seeing countries across the developing world make reforms in an effort to meet our strict eligibility criteria and to receive MCC funding."

MCC has approved \$495 million in threshold assistance to more than 20 countries.

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